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THE STORY OF THE PURITANS

*Who were they? What did they accomplish?
Why should we listen to them today?*

Erroll Hulse

THE STORY OF THE PURITANS

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Justification
Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility
Recovery of the Lord’s Day
Marriage and family
A biblical basis for spiritual experience
A robust doctrine of assurance
Hope for the future of the Church
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Introduction

The Relevance of the Puritans

Who were the Puritans? When did they live? What did they accomplish? What did they teach? History is not a popular subject. We cannot assume that those who are British are automatically well-educated in English history. It is rare for those outside Britain to know English history. How can we introduce overseas Christians to the best theological inheritance ever?

My concern extends beyond narrating the story. I want to create enthusiasm for the Puritans in order to profit from their practical example and benefit from their unique balance of doctrine, experience, and practice. The Puritans were men of deep theological understanding and vision who prayed for the earth to be filled with a knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

Today missionaries are involved as never before in taking the Gospel to all the world. Bible-based Christianity is spreading gradually in most of the 240 nations of the world. Believers have multiplied in great numbers, especially in sub-Sahara Africa, the Far East, and South America. Teaching which engenders holy living and stability is vastly needed. Historically the Puritan epoch is best able to supply this need for they were strongest where the churches in general are weakest today.

In face of the philosophic and religious trends of today, the Puritans are certainly relevant.

Post-modernism (PM) — Gradually from the 1960s and 1970s, the Western World has moved philosophically from Modernism to Post-modernism. For about two centuries thinking has been shaped by the Enlightenment with its emphasis on human reason and its optimism about human ability and human achievement. This arrogance has by-passed God and his revelation and led to the collapse of morality. Is Puritanism relevant within the present philosophical climate of Post-modernism? Writing on the subject of PM in *Foun-*

dations, Autumn 1997, Andrew Patterson of Kensington Baptist Church, Bristol, suggests that the Puritan approach is relevant. He maintains that “genuine spirituality consists in a re-discovery of the cohesive and comprehensive nature of the grace of God in the life of the believer.” This he urges, “rejects the isolating, fracturing and compartmentalizing effects of the last two centuries, and looks back to the time of the Puritans and Pietists, when there was an approach that was far healthier, vibrant, holistic, real, scriptural, and God-honouring.”

With the demise of Modernism (the Enlightenment) we now have a vacuum. This provides us with a unique opportunity to rebuild the foundations. We are challenged to understand and apply the Word of God today. As we do so we can look back and draw on the legacies of the Puritans. We can avoid their mistakes and weaknesses but learn a great deal from their strengths. Part 3 consists of ten subjects in which we can obtain help from the Puritans.

PM is fiercely antinomian. It is admitted that people make mistakes, but the word “sin” is seldom mentioned and the idea that we all sin against God is avoided. Right and wrong are judged according to human feelings. The idea that God has an unchangeable, holy, moral law by which he will judge every person is unpopular.

What does Puritanism have to say to the different evangelical sectors of the Church world-wide today?

Neo-orthodoxy — Of the theologians classified as Neo-orthodox, Karl Barth (1886-1968) is the most significant as he, more than any other this century, affected the course of Protestant theology in Europe and beyond. He set some on the road of studying Luther and Calvin and the Reformation of the 16th century. But while Barth challenged the Liberal establishment, there was a failure to set the record straight with regard to liberal views of the Bible. For instance, it is absolutely vital to believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve. It is essential to endorse the supernaturalism that pervades the biblical records. With Neo-orthodoxy one is never sure about the foundations. It is like walking on sinking sand. Puritanism shares with Neo-orthodoxy the challenge to use the mind, to think, and to analyze. But the strength of the Puritans is that there is never any question about the validity of the Scriptures. One walks always on the solid rock of the infallible Word of God.

Fundamentalism — Thankfully the Church of Jesus Christ on earth is always wider and larger than any one segment or denomination. The evangelical movement known as Fundamentalism is only a part of the wider body. That movement gathered momentum in the 1920s and 1930s. Fundamentalists came together into a movement out of the need to combat modernist theology. The leaders drew up a list of basic truths designed to keep intact doctrines which were denied or undermined by Liberals. Fundamentalism was strong in the USA and spread to other countries. The Puritans would agree with the passion to defend and promote basic truths such as the reliability of Scripture, the Trinity, and the deity of Christ. Unhappily Fundamentalism added to the “basics” a premillennial view of prophecy and in some cases dispensationalism, which is a view of history as specific time periods. The biblical basis for these periods is tenuous to say the least, yet the system is imposed by its propagators in an arbitrary way on the Bible. The Puritans were mostly postmillennial. A small number were premillennial. Eschatology was not made a point of division. We can learn from the Puritans not to major on minors. Christ’s second coming to judgment, the end of the world, the universal, physical resurrection from the dead, eternal heaven and hell are major issues in which we cannot compromise. But apart from a general outline we cannot map out the future. Evangelical unity is a precious commodity, and we should avoid damaging unity over matters which are not central.

Fundamentalists have also been inclined to add such issues as a ban on alcohol, card-playing, tobacco, dancing, and theater going. This has been the cause of endless strife and division. For instance, concerning alcohol, the Bible teaches temperance, not total abstinence. Wine is used at the Lord’s Table. Some fundamentalists even try to change the meaning of the word *wine* to uphold their total abstinence view. Puritanism is a wonderful antidote to the harmful and needless divisions which are caused by adding man-made rules to Scripture. Worldliness is an enemy. The cure is in the heart. A man can keep many rules but be worldly still, and at the same time possess a deadly spirit of Pharisaic self-righteousness. Puritanism concentrates on the great issue of the state of a person’s soul. When a soul is truly joined to Christ, every part of him—his thoughts, his words, and his actions—will be subject to the Word of God. While he makes rules for his own life, he will avoid making them for others. The Puritans included a chapter in the Westminster Confession on the subject of Christian liberty and liberty of con-

science. The Puritan message is one of liberty combined with self-control and discipline. The Puritan Confessions of Faith (Presbyterian, Congregational and Baptist) are silent where the Scripture is silent. For instance, there is nothing in the Bible about smoking, but there are passages which urge that we should care for our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. Liberation from harmful habits comes through the freedom imparted by Christ. That freedom comes by the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit.

The New Evangelicalism — Fundamentalism has worn an angry face being fiercely separatistic, intolerant, and aggressive. It has been viewed as the religion of the clenched fist. It was inevitable, therefore, that more friendly and reasonable avenues of expression would be sought. This came in the form of The New Evangelicalism: broad, scholarly, and friendly. However, this movement within evangelicalism has been troubled by compromise on the central issue of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. The New Evangelicalism split over the issue of the inerrancy of Scripture. Again Puritanism is commended. While the Puritans could not anticipate the details of this controversy, we appreciate the solid foundation that is laid with regard to the nature and authority of Scripture in the opening chapter of *The Westminster Confession*.

Pentecostalism — The Pentecostal movement, which is as wide and diverse as a rainbow, is noted for emphasis on three important subjects: the reality of spiritual experience, the demonstration of spiritual power, and joy in public worship. These matters were also stressed by the Puritans.

First, the Puritans placed great stress on the spiritual experience of God's free grace in conversion. The parameters of spiritual experience with regard to joy in justification, the love of the Father in adoption, patience in tribulation, and enjoyment of Christ were explored to the full by the Puritans. The Puritan view is that we are now complete in Christ. Spiritual experience consists of the ongoing application of the believer's experimental union with the three Persons of the Trinity. The New Testament does not suggest or command a specific second experience after conversion as though something has to be added to what we already are in Christ. Many in the Pentecostal movement concede that all who are in Christ have been baptized spiritually into Christ (1 Cor 12:12); no second specific experience is mandatory, and no second experience is to be

regarded as a type of “open sesame” to a Pandora’s box of new experiences. The Puritans would concur that spiritual power or the anointing of the Holy Spirit is needed not only for preaching but for service generally and for endurance in tribulation. The Holy Spirit is always at work in the believer to correct, guide, comfort, and empower.

Second, there is a stress in some Pentecostal denominations on the continuation of signs, wonders, and miracles. The Puritan view is that the apostles and prophets of the New Testament were extraordinary. They were given a special endowment for the work of setting the foundations. We do not have to repeat their work. It is not necessary to vindicate the Word of God with new signs and wonders. Puritan teaching is wonderfully liberating because spiritual leaders are not required to walk on water, replace missing limbs, raise the dead, or perform stupendous miracles such as creating fish and bread. The Word of God is all-sufficient, and we do not need to exercise the supernatural gifts of prophecies, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. As we examine the history of the Christian Church through the centuries and through the 20th century, the absence of miracles is evident. A major ethical embarrassment takes place when miracles are offered, especially miracles of healing, and then failure is evident. How sad it is to claim to be a miracle-worker and then to disappoint the hopes of hurting people. When such promises fail, disillusionment sets in which is very deep and wounding. We do not make promises we cannot fulfil. Rather, we point to the promise which will never fail, and that is the promise of the gospel—eternal life to everyone who repents and believes.

Third, there is the need for joyful public worship. Dull, lifeless worship is a contradiction of the joy of salvation. The regulative principle is important. This is a principle by which public worship is regulated according to the specifics of the New Testament. In other words, we should engage only in spiritual worship which is specified by Scripture—the public reading of Scripture, preaching, intercessory prayer, and singing. There is no specification as to how these elements are to be arranged. This suggests freedom. There is no reason why we should not have great joy and edification in our public worship. We do not need to resort to imitating the world or to entertainment. We can combine dignity and reverence with joy and gladness. Stephen Charnock, in an exposition on John 4:24, places the focus on God as central in worship when he refers to some of the essential elements involved:

“God is a Spirit infinitely happy, therefore we must approach him with cheerfulness; he is a Spirit of infinite majesty, therefore we must come before him with reverence; he is a Spirit infinitely high, therefore we must offer up our sacrifices with deepest humility; he is a Spirit infinitely holy, therefore we must address him with purity; he is a Spirit infinitely glorious, we therefore must acknowledge his excellency; he is a Spirit provoked by us, therefore we must offer up our worship in the name of a pacifying mediator and intercessor.”

Needless to say, tedium must be avoided in worship. The challenge for preachers not to weary their hearers will be addressed in a separate chapter on preaching.

Shallow evangelism — Possibly here more than anywhere the Puritans can help evangelicals who use the altar call and who too readily pronounce people converted simply because a decision for Christ has been recorded. One of the legacies of the Puritan era is a stable doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility to insure against the errors of Arminianism on the one hand and Hyper-Calvinism on the other.

Reconstructionism — This is a movement emanating out of America which stresses the importance of the moral law and holds to a post-millennial position which foresees that Christianity will prevail to the point where civil governments around the world will become Christian. Reconstructionism stresses the application of biblical teaching to every facet of life, private and public, and by exposition of the Scriptures seeks to equip politicians to apply biblical law to public life. Puritanism would endorse the emphasis on the Ten Commandments and the need to persuade and teach politicians to apply these commandments in legislation. However, the Puritans would part company with any who sought to follow theonomy, that is the application of Old Testament laws to public life. With regard to the future, as has already been pointed out, the Puritans varied. They were mostly postmillennial, but their optimism was centered in the transforming power of the gospel and the building up of churches, rather than preoccupation with the powers of civil government.

Broad evangelicalism — Broad evangelicalism is innocuous and is no threat to the world, to sin, or the devil. The Puritans exer-

cised spiritual power. They brought down the opposition of darkness. The English Puritans gave to England the Christian family and the Lord's Day. Allied also to broad evangelicalism is impotent scholarship which is undisciplined and effete. Allied too to broad evangelicalism is shallow evangelism. In a recent book *Are You Really Born Again?* – Understanding True and False Conversion (EP), Kent Philpott testifies how he has moved in his ministry from shallow evangelistic practice with its altar call to Reformed and Puritan practice. With regard to scholarship the Puritans were full of practical application. Sadly, often where we find substantial evangelical scholarship today, it can be lacking in the area of application.

Calvinistic Sovereign Graceism — Some readers may wonder what this is. The fact is that many churches disown the description “reformed” because they disagree with the Law and the Lord's Day chapters (chapters 19 and 21 in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* or its Baptist counterpart *The 1689 London Confession of Faith**). They embrace the five points of Calvinism. These five points are easily remembered by the acrostic TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints. This formulation originated at the Synod of Dort in Holland in 1618-19.

The five points highlight the truth that we are saved by grace alone. There are, however, dangers in a simplistic reduction of Calvinism to five points. In Scripture wherever the truth of salvation by grace alone is stated, it is in the context of practical application. Without spiritual application there is the danger of being merely academic or intellectual. This was largely characteristic of fundamentalism. As with other groupings of churches, Sovereign Grace churches vary widely in character. A few have fallen prey to a cultic spirit by implying that only those who believe in the five points are true, born-again Christians. Puritanism corrects such error by keeping to the biblical centrality of union with Christ as the main feature of the Christian, a union which brings with it at one and the same time justification imputed and holiness of life shown by fruitfulness (Rom 6:1-18). The Puritans were careful not to add to justification by faith alone. In some instances “Calvinistic Sovereign Graceism”

* Available from Chapel Library at the address on the back cover (also see footnote on page 12).

adds to justification by faith by insisting that to be a true believer one must possess the five points. But faith alone joins the believer to Christ. To that nothing must be added.

Hyper-Calvinism — The essence of Hyper-Calvinism is to deny common grace of the love of God to all men. In other words, God only loves the elect and only hates the non-elect. Further, Hyper-Calvinism denies the sincere free offers of the Gospel to all men. C. H. Spurgeon was a Puritan in every fiber of his being. In his preaching we have wonderful examples of the five points of Calvinism preached evangelistically. For instance, Spurgeon poured scorn on a general redemption that supposedly made salvation possible but does not in fact actually save anyone. Spurgeon preached particular redemption in a most powerful evangelistic manner. The Puritans can provide stability today in the biblical manner that they held to the different facets of the love of God and the way in which they held in harmony the doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. One example of that is John Flavel's *Christ Knocking at the Door of Sinners' Hearts* which was published as a paperback by Baker Book House, 400 pages of gripping exposition all from one text, Revelation 3:20.

The Church of Christ on earth at the end of the 20th century is larger and more diverse than it has ever been. Only some aspects and strands of that huge body have been referred to, yet from these descriptions it should be evident that the Puritan writings are relevant today.

The English Monarchs from 1491 to 1689

The Tudor line

HENRY VIII born 1491

Dv	wife number one	Catherine of Aragon who bore Mary, later to become queen
B	wife number two	Anne Boleyn who in 1533 bore Elizabeth, later to become queen.
D	wife number three	Jane Seymour who bore Edward, later to become king
Dv	wife number four	Anne of Cleves marriage supposedly not consummated
B	wife number five	Catherine Howard
S	wife number six	Catherine Parr

key: *Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Survived*

EDWARD VI (1537-1553) died aged only 16. During his reign England moved politically in the direction of Protestantism.

MARY (1553-1558) nicknamed 'Bloody Mary' because of her cruelty. About 270 burned at stake for their faith. Mary married Roman Catholic Philip son of Emperor Charles V in 1554

ELIZABETH (1558-1603) principal events

- 1559 The Elizabethan Settlement
- 1570 Elizabeth excommunicated by the Pope of Rome
- 1588 The Spanish Armada

The Stuart line

JAMES I (1603-1625)

- 1604 The Hampton Court Conference
- 1611 Publication of the King James Version (Authorised Version)
- 1618 The Synod of Dort rejects Arminianism
- 1624 Richard Montagu's anti-Calvinist treatise points to the rise of Arminianism

CHARLES I (1603-1640)

- 1629 For eleven years Charles rules without Parliament
- 1637 Imposition of new Prayer Book provokes riots in Edinburgh
- 1640-1660 Rule by Parliament
- 1642 Civil War
- 1643-1647 The Westminster Assembly
- 1645 Archbishop William Laud executed
- 1649 Charles I executed
- 1658 Death of Oliver Cromwell

CHARLES II (1660-1685)

- 1662 The Act of Uniformity and the Great Ejection of Puritan pastors

JAMES II (1685-1688)

WILLIAM III 1689-1702

The Story of the Puritans

“Almost no one reads their writings now.” So wrote William Haller in 1957 in his book, *The Rise of Puritanism*. His comment was true then. It is not true now. Since 1957 there has taken place a Reformed theological renewal which has its roots in Puritan books.¹ In addition to the extensive publishing achievement of the *Banner of Truth* in the UK and *Soli Deo Gloria* publishers in the USA, there are other publishing houses in the business of reworking and publishing the Puritans.

Included in the republication of Puritan writings is the translation of Puritan expositions in other languages. For instance, Jeremiah Burroughs’ *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* has recently been published in Albanian, Arabic, French, Indonesian, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, and Spanish.² The need for a popular historical background into which we can readily set the Puritan authors is one of the reasons for this presentation. I would urge newcomers to the Puritans to memorize the names and dates of the monarchs for the 16th and 17th centuries. The time grid is essential. Each monarch put his or her own peculiar stamp on that part of the story. Compared to the monarchy today, the kings and queens of that era seemed to wield supreme authority. In fact their powers were ill-defined. He/she had no standing army, was often short of money, and had to govern bearing in mind the goodwill of the land-owning classes who were the natural leaders in society.

In his *A Short History of the English People*, J. R. Green declared, “No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth to the meeting of the Long Parliament (1640-1660). England became the people of a book, and that book the Bible.”³

This may sound exaggerated, but we can be sure that what Green meant is that the Puritans eventually came to wield a spiritual influence well beyond their proportion, for they always formed a

minority. It will help to see the story in perspective by recalling that the population of England in 1500 was about two million and in 1600 approximately four million. As for religion, in spite of enforced church attendance, it is doubtful whether more than a quarter of the population of England during that period could be said to have any religion at all.⁴ It is interesting to observe that the population of England is now about 48 million and has 13,000 parishes with 10,000 clergy, 8,000 of whom are paid. This general observation needs to be remembered not only for the whole time that we will be viewing, but even more so today when those who profess and practice the Christian Faith constitute probably less than ten percent. Ralph Josselin in his Essex parish did not celebrate communion for nine years, and when he did in 1651, only 34 qualified! Josselin spoke of three categories of parishioners—first, those who seldom hear preaching; second, those who are “sleepy hearers;” and third, “our society,” a small group of the godly.⁵

Nominalism has always characterized the great majority of Anglicans. It was so then as it is now. By about 1600 the number of Puritan ministers had increased to about ten percent, that is about 800 of the 8,000 Church of England clergy. By 1660 this proportion had increased to about twenty-five percent. Between 1660 and 1662 about 2,000 were forced out of the National Church.⁶

Before the Reformation the English Church was Roman Catholic. In character it was “a collection of practices, habits and attitudes rather than an intellectually coherent body of doctrine.”⁷ The Protestantization of England was essentially gradual, taking place slowly throughout Elizabeth’s reign, “here a little and there a little,” and very much in piecemeal fashion. From about 1600 growth accelerated. At the time of Henry VIII’s breach with Rome, England was officially completely Roman Catholic. In 1642 it is estimated that not more than two percent was Catholic, but ten percent of the peerage was still so. Throughout the period I will outline, England was a sacral society. Everyone was required to conform to the Church of England. This resulted in “recusants,” who refused to attend the Church of England services, either for Puritan reasons or out of loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. From 1570 to 1791 this was punishable by a fine and involved many civil disabilities. Recusants tended to lie low and keep out of trouble. It was during the period 1640 to 1660 that Christian denominations surfaced: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers (all these together representing only about five percent of the population).⁸ The Toleration

Act of 1689 marked the end of the Church of England's claim to be *the* single all-inclusive Church of the English people, although it remained the Church established by law.

Who Were the Puritans?

In 1568 there were “many congregations of the Anabaptists in London, who called themselves ‘Puritans’ or ‘the unspotted lambs of the Lord’”.⁹ It has been widely accepted that the word “Puritan” first came into use in connection with these groups.¹⁰ It was during the Elizabethan period (1558-1603) that the Puritans grew increasingly as a distinct brotherhood of pastors who emphasized the great centralities of Christianity: faithfulness to Scripture, expository preaching, pastoral care, personal holiness, and practical godliness applied to every area of life. The word “Puritan” began to be used to refer to these people who were scrupulous about their way of life. “The godly” or those who were not nominal were dubbed Puritans.¹¹ Those who cared about the gospel (gospellers) and who sought to propagate the gospel were Puritans. As the Scriptures warn, the godly can expect to bear reproach for their holy way of life. The godly of that time were derided as killjoys and nick-named “Puritans.”

A new meaning developed and this came about through the Arminian/Calvinist controversy.^{*} Those ministers in England who subscribed to the doctrines of grace were called Puritans. When submitting a list of names for preferment (promotion), the dogmatic Arminian Archbishop William Laud placed a “P” beside the Puritans thus warning against their convictions, and an “O” beside others for orthodox as Laud interpreted that term, conveying the meaning that they were acceptable.

The word “Puritan” has been used much as a term of derision. In 1641 Henry Parker complained that “papists, bishops, court flatterers, stage-poets, minstrels, jesting buffoons, all the shameless rout of drunkards, lechers, and swearing ruffians, and many others took delight in deriding people as puritans.”¹²

We will tell the story of the Puritans in three parts:

^{*} For a more complete explanation of this controversy, see the “Doctrines of Grace in the Gospel of John” course, available from Mount Zion Bible Institute at the address on the back cover.

1. ANTECEDENTS
2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PURITAN MOVEMENT
THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL BROTHERHOOD (1558-1603)
3. THE FULL FLOWERING OF PURITANISM (1603-1662)

1. ANTECEDENTS

i William Tyndale and the Supremacy of the Bible

The first feature of the Puritan movement was a love for the Word of God. Before the rise of Puritanism ignorance of the Word of God was widespread. In 1524 William Tyndale (c. 1495-1536) made a brave decision to defy the law forbidding Bible translation and the law forbidding Englishmen to leave the country without permission.

Born in Gloucestershire, Tyndale was educated at Oxford where he gained his MA in 1515. Thereafter he came into conflict with the local clergy who avowed their loyalty to the Pope and tradition in preference to the teachings of the Bible. Tyndale was appalled by the prevailing ignorance and in an argument with an opponent asserted in the home of his patron Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury in Gloucestershire, "If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause that a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

On the Continent Tyndale was hounded from one place to another. Eventually he was betrayed and suffered in prison. At Vilvorde, near Brussels, in 1536 he was put to death by strangling and burning. Thus ended the life of one of England's greatest heroes.

William Tyndale was a talented theologian. His theological writings were gathered and published in 1572. Tyndale's work represents a formative contribution in the development of Protestant Christianity especially on the central issue of justification by faith alone, by grace alone, which can be seen in a competent reply made to Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), English Lord Chancellor, who wrote books against Tyndale.

Tyndale succeeded in translating and printing the New Testament plus the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah. These were smuggled back into England. The ex-friar Miles Coverdale (1488-1568), an associate of Tyndale's, turned to Switzerland for protection. There, using Tyndale's work, he translated the whole Bible.

Henry VIII approved this translation. By 1537 two editions had been published in England. Later the 1560 Geneva Bible became a favorite Bible with the Puritans. Between 1579 and 1615 at least 39 editions of the Geneva Bible were printed in England. A predestinarian catechism was included in the Geneva Bible and there were marginal notes.¹³ For instance, the locusts of Revelation 9:3 were identified as bishops and archbishops, monks and cardinals.¹⁴

***ii The Role of the Martyrs and the Crucial Ministry
of John Foxe the Martyrologist***

During the short reign of Edward (1547-1553), the Protestant position was consolidated. At the death of Queen Mary (1553-1558), England was technically re-aligned with Rome. It was during the reign of Mary, nick-named “Bloody Mary,” that more than 270 Protestant martyrs were burned at the stake. Included among these were artisans and ordinary people. Among those put to death for their faith were leaders of great stature like John Bradford, as well as distinguished bishops including John Hooper, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thus, under Mary, some of England’s noblest sons lost their lives. The gruesome scenes of human bodies burning alive were etched into the minds of the people and must be the primary influence molding the Puritans who followed from 1558 to 1662 and beyond. The effect of this to turn the people from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism is beyond calculation. During her reign Mary was Rome’s greatest asset in England. Since her death her memory has always been Rome’s greatest liability in England.¹⁵

The testimony of the martyrs was extraordinary. Their impact was greatly increased through the writing industry of John Foxe.

Born in Lancashire in 1517, Foxe began studies at Oxford, aged 16. His studies were instrumental in his conversion by the time he had earned his MA. Because of his Protestant convictions Foxe suffered acute poverty. Scholars in those days depended on wealthy patrons to give them lodging and meals in exchange for teaching services. Unable to find such a position in London, Foxe nearly starved to death. One day he sat disconsolate in St. Paul’s churchyard. A stranger came up to him and placed a generous sum of money in his hands. Three days later he obtained a position in the home of the Earl of Surrey at Reigate where he taught the Earl’s children.

When Mary came to the throne, Foxe left for the Continent where he joined English refugees—first at Frankfurt and then at Basle. He had already begun to collect materials for his work on the martyrs from the time of the apostles to the martyrs under the reign of Queen Mary. Foxe's work eventually expanded to 1,700 folio pages. Foxe was essentially a literary man, meticulous in detail. His reliability for accuracy has been questioned but not refuted. A much expanded *Book of Martyrs* was published in 1570. It was placed in the cathedrals and in parish churches and in the halls of public companies. Never had such a work on such a scale appeared in English before, certainly never at such a moment. Daniel Neal declares, "No book ever gave such a mortal wound to Popery as this; it was dedicated to the queen, and was in such high reputation, that it was ordered to be set up in the churches where it raised in the people an invincible horror and detestation of that religion which had shed so much innocent blood."¹⁶ Along with the Bible, Foxe's *Martyrs* became a family book in many homes.¹⁷

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was the principal practical means of turning England to Protestantism. The powerful testimony of the Marian martyrs in their agonizing deaths moved hearts and turned minds to consider the reasons which inspired such faith. In addition Foxe's writing was used to instill into Puritanism the ideal of the Christian hero: the person who bears faithful witness to Christ, even to death. It was glorious to them that the martyrs could triumph over the last and most dreaded enemy. Dying well was part of the Puritan mentality. We see this in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* description of the various characters who come to cross the river of death. Remember Mr. Despondency? His last words were: "Farewell night, welcome day!"

Foxe immortalized the dying sayings of the martyrs such as Bishop Hugh Latimer's words to Bishop Ridley when they suffered together at the stake: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as, I trust, shall never be put out." A memorial stands at the spot in Oxford where this took place.

John Foxe inspired and promoted the idea of England as an elect nation, a people set apart from all others, a people specially called to preserve and promote the Word of God.¹⁸

*iii The Lutheran and Genevan Reformation Movements,
especially the Example of John Calvin*

Momentum for reform came to England from the writings and example of the Continental Reformers as a whole. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the dominant early influence, but later John Calvin (1509-1564) exercised a profound effect in England. Calvin's style of preaching straight through text by text, book after book in Scripture, and his example of reformation at Geneva impressed the English refugees. There were about one hundred English refugees in Geneva at the time of Mary's reign of terror. These refugees caught the vision for the complete reformation of the Church in its form of government and its form of worship. Several of the refugees who returned at the time of Elizabeth's accession were given high and privileged office in the Established Church. To their disappointment they realized that radical reform would be blocked.

In due course the vision of a church reformed after the Genevan pattern and made Presbyterian was taken up by Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603), a popular teacher at Cambridge. Cartwright's lectures on the Acts of the Apostles in 1570 made a tremendous impact and encouraged attempts to bring about reformation in church government. Two of his disciples, John Field and Thomas Wilcox, in 1572 wrote in detail on this theme under the title *An Admonition to Parliament*. This was forceful and uncompromising writing but exceedingly unpopular with the government. Field and Wilcox soon found themselves in prison.

When Cartwright was challenged and charged with error, he answered by drawing up a statement which summarizes the issues as follows:

1. Archbishops and archdeacons (the Episcopal system) ought to be abolished.
2. The officers of the Church should be patterned on the New Testament model. Bishops, or elders, should preach and deacons take care of the poor.
3. Every church should be governed by its own minister and elders.
4. No man should solicit for ecclesiastical preferment.
5. Church officers should be chosen by the Church and not the State.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PURITAN MOVEMENT THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL BROTHERHOOD (1558-1603)

When Elizabeth rode into London on 23rd November 1558, she was twenty-five years old. Exceptional in her ability to measure political forces, she grasped well the emotions and desires of her people. More than any other Tudor monarch, she controlled Government and Church policy. She spoke Latin, French, and Italian fluently and could read Greek. Elizabeth resolved to work for the establishment of a strong united nation with one united National Church. William Cecil, Elizabeth's chief minister, believed that "the state could never be in safety where there was toleration of two religions."

At the time of Elizabeth's accession to the throne, the contest between Catholicism and Protestantism to win the hearts of the people was undecided. Most were ready to conform either way. Elizabeth's administration was moderately Protestant. She excluded fully committed Roman Catholics but neither were there any from the Genevan camp. Elizabeth maintained a balance between the Roman Catholic and Protestant constituencies. Even in the matter of marriage she kept everyone guessing. Marriage to a foreign prince would have enormous political and religious implications. In any event she never married. She was less violent than her half-sister Mary. Nevertheless, at least two Anabaptists were burned at the stake in 1575, and Separatist leaders such as Greenwood, Barrowe, and Penry were executed by hanging in 1593.

The Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth in 1570. This strengthened opposition to the Pope and assisted the Protestant cause in England. In 1588 a massive effort was made by Spain to invade England. The Spanish Armada consisted of an impressive fleet of 130 ships intended to convey 50,000 soldiers as an attacking force. The Armada suffered an overwhelming defeat. Less than half the Spanish ships returned home. This event further strengthened the Protestant party in England since the English then, as now, prize their nationhood. They resented the threat from Roman Catholic Spain, a nation notorious for the Inquisition, a most hideous and devilish system of persecution.

To appreciate the conditions under which the brotherhood of godly Puritan pastors labored, it is important to understand the Acts

of Supremacy and Uniformity and the new Prayer Book which were imposed upon England in 1559. The effect of the Act of Supremacy was to declare Elizabeth to be “Supreme Head of the Church of England.”

The way in which we worship God is a sensitive issue and it is not surprising that pressure for ministers to wear the surplice (a loose white over-garment) caused resentment. Most conformed for the sake of peace. Others refused. A Manchester curate preached “that the surplice is a rag of the pope and a mighty heresy in the church and he who maintains it cannot be saved!” A minister appearing before the Bishop of Lichfield in 1570 called it “a polluted and cursed mark of the beast” and warned that thanks to the use of “such rags of antichrist the people will fall away from God into a second popery that will be worse than the first!”¹⁹ The application of the laws enforcing conformity varied from place to place. Many bishops had little desire to persecute ministers who after all were fellow-Protestants.

The inception of the Puritan movement is found in a spiritual fellowship of gifted pastor/preachers that emerged in the 1580s and 1590s. Some of the best known were Richard Greenham, Henry Smith, Richard Rogers, Laurence Chaderton, Arthur Hildersam, John Dod, John Rogers, and William Perkins. Puritans multiplied through the work of these leaders who became famous not only for their preaching but as physicians of the soul. I will describe briefly four leaders of the brotherhood.²⁰

Firstly, there was Richard Greenham (1531-1591). Greenham left the academic atmosphere of Cambridge where he had been a tutor in 1570 to take up pastoral work in the humble village of Dry Drayton about five miles from Cambridge. There he labored for twenty years, only preaching away occasionally. Greenham was a pastor *par excellence*, a physician able to discern the deep experiences of the soul, an expert in counselling and comforting. He constantly rose, winter and summer, at 4 am. He refused several lucrative promotions and abounded in acts of generosity to the poor.

Young men came to live at Dry Drayton, forming a “School of Christ” devoting themselves to the Scriptures and to the outworking of the Word in their own souls and the souls of others. Why should a village situation be exciting? The answer is that here we see a microcosm of a wider work—the rooting of the gospel in rural England. Richard Greenham was criticized for his Nonconformity and the manner in which he conducted worship services. He was

passive in his resistance. He did not wish to argue about things he regarded as *adiaphora*, that is, things indifferent. He preached Christ and him crucified and simply pleaded for tolerance that he should continue to be a faithful minister of Christ. He enjoyed the friendship of men of influence who always managed to put in a good word for him and thus keep him out of trouble.

Secondly, there was Richard Rogers (1550-1620). In 1574 Richard Rogers became a preacher of God's Word in the village of Wethersfield, there to labor for the conversion of souls but also to work at mortification of sin in his own soul. Like Greenham, he kept a school in his house for young men.

Having first committed himself to the rigors of the godly life, he wrote in detail on practical godly living. This was called *The Seven Treatises*, a work which went through seven editions before 1630. His close friend and neighbor, Ezekiel Culverwell, expressed the wish that readers of the book could have seen its author's practice with their own eyes and heard his doctrine with their own ears. Here we see illustrated a fascination with the essence of godliness. Rogers kept a diary and from it can be seen a man walking as closely as possible with God. One of his series of expositions gained fame, namely, discourses on the book of Judges.²¹

We should not imagine that Rogers led an easy life being waited on by servants so that he could give himself to spiritual exercises. Besides the care of his immediate large family, we read of him that "he did regard it as his duty to meditate, study and write but at the same time he carried on no less conscientiously the activities of a householder, a farmer, a figure in the countryside, a preacher, a pastor, a reformer and the head of a boarding school."

Thirdly, there was William Perkins (1558-1602). William Perkins labored at Cambridge with remarkable effect. Combined in him, to a remarkable extent, were the spiritual qualities and ministerial skills typical of the brotherhood. He excelled both in the pulpit and with the pen, keeping the university printer busy with many books. More than those of any other minister of his time, his published works were found on the shelves of the generation that followed him. He was the first to write a full exposition on the subject of preaching in *The Art of Prophesying*.²² Typical of the Puritans, Perkins' approach to preaching was essentially applicatory. In preparation he considered the needs of every kind of hearer in the congregation. Although he died so young, his writings ex-

ceeded in quantity and quality all other Puritan authors up to that time.

William Perkins was no ivory tower academic. For example, he made it his business to obtain permission to minister to the prisoners in jail. He won souls to Christ from among them just as he did among the huge crowds who came to hear him preach at St. Andrews. It is said of him that his sermons were, at one and the same time, all law and all gospel: all law to expose the shame of sin, and all gospel to offer a full and free pardon for lost sinners. His was an awakening ministry which stirred lost souls to see the reality of eternal condemnation. Perkins was so gifted in eloquence that it was said that the very way he uttered the word “damn” made sinners tremble.

Perkins died young. His loss was sorely felt.

Fourthly, there was *Laurence Chaderton (1537-1635)*. Laurence Chaderton lived to be almost a hundred years old. He published little. He came from a wealthy Roman Catholic family by which he was “nuzzled up in Popish superstition.” He suffered disinheritance when he embraced the gospel and Puritanism. A well-known benefactor of that time was Sir Walter Mildmay who founded Emmanuel College at Cambridge. Sir Walter chose Chaderton to be master of that college which position he filled for forty years. He was a lecturer for fifty years at St. Clement’s Church, Cambridge. When he eventually came to give up his lectureship at St. Clement’s, forty ministers begged him to continue, claiming that they owed their conversion to his ministry. There is a description of him preaching for two hours when he announced that he would no longer trespass on his hearers’ patience, whereupon the congregation cried out, “For God’s sake, sir, go on! Go on!”

The growth of Puritanism was due to pastors of this kind whose lives and godly example captured the imagination of many. However, as we have seen in the case of William Perkins and Laurence Chaderton, the role of Cambridge University was tremendous in advancing Puritanism. Puritan endowed colleges such as Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex produced a steady supply of talented Puritan pastors and preachers.

In tracing the rise of Puritanism we must reckon too with the role of lectureships. In market towns magistrates engaged their own preachers and organized weekday sermons. Lectureships were established which were a means of by-passing the system of conformity to the *Prayer Book* and church ceremonial. Richard

Rogers of Wethersfield and Henry Smith at St. Clement Danes in London officially acted as lecturers. Between 1560 and 1662 at least 700 clergymen held lectureships at one time or another in London. Of these at least 60 percent were Puritans.²³ The patronage of nobles and gentry played an important role in the advance of the Puritan movements. Wealthy patrons supported and protected Puritan preachers.

During Elizabeth's reign the place of prophesyings loomed large. These were meetings for preaching expository sermons and discussion which became very popular. Elizabeth felt threatened and sought to suppress the prophesyings. Archbishop Edmund Grindal refused to carry out her will and argued in favor of the prophesyings. For his faithfulness he was suspended from office for the last seven years of his life and confined to his house for most of that time. In May 1577 the Queen herself sent letters to the bishops ordering them to suppress the prophesying meetings.

3. THE FULL FLOWERING OF PURITANISM from 1603 to 1662

This period from 1603 to 1662 was turbulent, a time when conflict between Crown and Parliament came to a climax in the civil war. Religious pluralism surfaced in the 1640s. The story of the Puritans reached its apex in this period, especially as is seen in the Westminster Assembly. It is vital to know the history which we will now sketch in five phases.

James I

Charles I and Archbishop Laud

Civil War and the Rise of Oliver Cromwell

The Puritan Ascendancy

The Restoration of the Monarchy and the Decline of Puritanism.

James I

Elizabeth I died in 1603. She had purposed to make England great, and in that she saw success to considerable measure. Despite her personal tantrums, sulks and irrationalities, her reign was a period of political stability, especially so in the light of what was to follow in the mid-17th century. As already noted, at the beginning

of the 17th century the Puritans represented about ten percent of the body of Church of England clergy.

The Puritans fostered high hopes that James (James VI of Scotland, James I of England), coming from Presbyterian Scotland, would herald Church reform. They were sadly disappointed. A petition known as the Millenary Petition, believed to represent about 1,000 Puritans, was presented to James I on his way from Scotland to London. This petition urged reformation and led to the conference known as the Hampton Court Conference. This took place on three separate days in January 1604 at Hampton Palace in London. James was highly intelligent. He understood well the intricacies of Church government. He believed in the “divine right of kings,” that is, to disobey the king is to disobey God. James had every intention of maintaining supreme power having had enough of cantankerous Presbyterians in Scotland. It was clear as daylight that the Puritans wished to “Presbyterianize” the Church of England. As the Hampton Court Conference went on, so King James became more and more bad tempered. He made dogmatic assertions such as, “No bishop, no king!” and “Presbytery agrees as much with monarchy as God with the Devil!” And to the Puritan divines he said, “You had better hurry up and conform or you will be harried out of the land!” The conference ended in a right royal flurry of bad temper! The King was agreeable to a new translation of the Bible known as *The Authorized Version* (or King James Version) which was completed in 1611. Otherwise, concessions were few and insignificant.

Between 1604 and 1609 about eighty clergy were deprived of their livings for their non-conformity, most of these before 1607. The bishops had been told to persuade rather than coerce subscription to Anglican practice. In Parliament, the godly campaigned for the reinstatement of deprived ministers.²⁴

King James sent delegates to Dort. Held in 1618-19 in The Netherlands, the Synod of Dort is an important event in the history of the Christian Church. The conference affirmed the orthodox Calvinist position on the sovereignty of God over against the tenets of Arminianism. James supported the Calvinist position against the Arminians. Subsequently he became ambivalent on the issue. In 1624 Richard Montagu published an anti-Calvinist treatise with the title *A New Gagg for an Old Goose*. This was part of an increasing trend toward Arminianism in the National Church (of England).²⁵

Charles I and Archbishop Laud

James I died in 1625. Charles I, handsome, dignified, chaste, was enthroned king. However, unlike Elizabeth and his father James, he lacked political skill and especially so in the art of keeping checks and balances which is essential in politics. Charles married Henrietta Maria, sister of the reigning French king Louis XIII. Maria was an ardent Roman Catholic. She meddled with state affairs. This created constant suspicion among members of Parliament and in the nation. These suspicions were mixed with fear as the cause of Protestantism on the Continent of Europe was receding which placed many Protestants in danger.

William Laud became Charles' trusted adviser. From the time of the accession of Charles to the throne in 1625 Laud was exercising power, but this was formalized when he became the archbishop in 1633. James had warned Charles that Laud did not understand the Scottish people: "He kenned not the stomach of that people." This was a warning which Charles did not heed. Laud was hostile in every way to the Puritan teaching. One of his first acts as archbishop was to encourage games and pastimes on the Lord's Day which antagonized the Puritans. He was an avowed Arminian with its emphasis on free will and rejection of predestination. Laud was superstitious. He embraced the outward forms of Roman Catholic worship but rejected the authority of the Pope. His idea of what he called "The Beauty of Holiness" consisted of rituals and ceremonies. To this day many Anglican churches have altars at the east end. Although the Canon law always refers to "the holy table," the idea of the altar is perpetuated. The message of an altar is that of sacrifice. Laud believed the altar was "the greatest place of God's residence upon earth—yea, greater than the pulpit."²⁶

The famous historian Lord Thomas Macaulay (who did not comprehend the spirituality of the Puritans) certainly had the measure of William Laud and wrote of him, "Of all the prelates of the Anglican Church, Laud had departed farthest from the principles of the Reformation, and had drawn nearest to Rome... He was by nature rash, irritable, quick to feel for his own dignity, slow to sympathize with the sufferings of others, and prone to the error, common in superstitious men, of mistaking his own peevish and malignant moods for emotions of pious zeal. Under his direction every corner of the realm was subjected to a constant and minute inspection. Every little congregation of separatists was tracked out and broken up... ." ²⁷ Macaulay's hyperbole accurately depicts the

zeal of the persecutors, but we can be thankful that by no means all separatist assemblies were broken up.

As Archbishop, Laud wielded power to arrest and imprison those who would not conform. He used a court called the “Star Chamber” to interrogate and persecute. An example of the cruelty of Laud is seen in the case of a Dr. Alexander Leighton, father of the well known bishop Robert Leighton. Without any defense or right of appeal, Leighton was sent to Newgate Prison. When brought before an arbitrary court he was condemned to have his ears cut off, his nose slit on both sides, be branded in the face with a double “S S” (sower of sedition), be twice whipped, be placed in the pillory, and then be subject to life imprisonment! When this outrageous sentence was pronounced, Laud gave thanks to God!²⁸ Other well-known characters who received similar barbaric treatment were William Prynne, John Bastwick, Henry Burton and John Lilburne.

Bitter persecution was waged against the Puritans. Between 1629 and 1640, 20,000 men, women, and children left for New England including seventy-nine ministers, twenty-eight of whom returned when conditions improved at home.²⁹ Many made their exodus through The Netherlands. Among the most famous leaders to settle in New England were Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, and Thomas Shepard. The role of William Ames (1576-1633) is noteworthy. He was a Puritan whose principal ministry was exercised in Holland, but his writings were very popular in New England. *The Marrow of Theology* was his most influential book.

Charles ruled the country without Parliament from 1629 to 1640. Administration was maintained through county courts. Political power lay largely in the hands of about 60 noblemen or peers, very wealthy aristocrats who owned most of the land. Below them were the gentry. When the Civil War began in earnest in 1642, peers and gentry were about evenly divided in their loyalties to the king.

Civil War and the Rise of Oliver Cromwell

When Laud attempted to enforce the Church of England Prayer Book and Liturgy on Presbyterian Scotland in 1638, it was like striking a match to dry gunpowder! This is highlighted by a famous incident in St. Giles Church, Edinburgh. Jenny Geddes, infuriated by a pompous dean in a white surplice walking down the aisle to announce the reading, took hold of her stool and hurled it at him! In

today's idiom she cried out, "You miserable upstart! Will you say mass in my ear?" Jenny's example greatly heartened others to resist imposition of popish rituals which they hated.

In 1638 Charles mobilized an army to subdue Scotland, but the English army was soundly defeated and in 1639 a truce was negotiated.

Tensions between Parliament and the king increased. Demonstrations in London against royal authority and popery were quickly put down. The king tried to assert his own authority over Parliament. On January 4th, 1642, with a band of armed men he entered the House of Commons in order to arrest the leader of Parliament John Pym and four other leaders. This backfired. The five had been forewarned. Just in time they escaped by barge down the River Thames and hid in the city. This action by the king incited much more opposition to himself. A revolution was brewing. For his own safety Charles was obliged to leave London. By May 1642 he had set up his headquarters in York.

The first battle of the Civil War which ensued took place at Edgehill in October 1642. This resulted in a draw. At first there seemed to be a balance of power between the Royalists (Cavaliers) and the parliamentary forces (Roundheads). In an attempt to break what was a military deadlock Parliament signed the Solemn League and Covenant with the Scots.

In January 1644 a Scottish army crossed the border. In July 1644 the battle of Marston Moor was fought and won by the combined armies of Scotland, Yorkshire (led by Sir Thomas Fairfax), and the Eastern Association led by Oliver Cromwell and the Earl of Manchester. It was Oliver Cromwell's role and success in this battle that created his military reputation and won his soldiers the nickname "Ironsides."

This victory was not followed up. Some of the Parliamentary leaders, especially that of the Earl of Essex, were weak and indecisive. Parliament realized that a more determined and resolute leadership was needed. Victory could not be achieved without better generals and the reorganization of the army. Cromwell blamed one of the leaders, the Earl of Manchester, for retreating instead of attacking the enemy. Manchester made a reply which is very revealing because it shows what was at stake if the Roundheads were to lose this war to the Cavaliers: "If we beat the King 99 times yet he is King still, and his posterity, and we are his subjects still; but if

the King beat us *once* we should be hanged and our posterity undone.”

In 1645 the army was reorganized as the New Model Army. The commander-in-chief was Sir Thomas Fairfax, only thirty three years old. His cavalry general was Cromwell. In the Civil War battles from this point forward it was Cromwell’s military discipline and strategies that proved decisive. Lord Macaulay describes Oliver Cromwell as one who feared God and was zealous for public liberty. He writes: “With such men he filled his own regiment, and, while he subjected them to a discipline more rigid than had ever before been known in England, he administered to their intellectual and moral nature stimulants of fearful potency... Fairfax, a brave soldier, but of mean understanding and irresolute temper, was the nominal Lord General of the forces; but Cromwell was their real head... Cromwell made haste to organize the whole army on the same principles on which he had organized his own regiment... That which chiefly distinguished the army of Cromwell from other armies was the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded all ranks. It is acknowledged by the most zealous Royalists that in that singular camp no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, and that during the long dominion of the soldiery, the property of the peaceable citizen and the honour of women were held sacred.”³⁰

Cromwell surrounded himself with men of prayer. He led his men into battle personally. He possessed an astonishing ability to measure the morale of his soldiers and knew just the right moment to strike for victory. Cromwell fought many battles and never lost one. When we remember that he did not train in a military academy but was his own architect in warfare, he must go down as one of the greatest generals of all time. Roman Catholic author Lady Antonia Fraser in her biography³¹ says of Cromwell as a strategist: “To achieve what was necessary to do, and achieve it perfectly is a rare distinction whatever the scale: it is that which gives to Cromwell, him too, the right to be placed in the hall of fame.”

The Puritan Ascendancy

Archbishop Laud was imprisoned by Parliament in 1641 and executed by beheading for treason at the Tower of London in January 1645. Government of the Church by bishops was abolished in 1646. Progressive victory for Parliament in the war brought a new set of problems. There was a division in Parliament between the

Presbyterians and the Independents. The Presbyterian majority in Parliament disliked and feared the army in which the Independents dominated. There was unrest in the army due to unpaid wages. In 1647 Charles negotiated a secret treaty with the Scots which led to a renewal of civil war. Charles' duplicity led to the army bringing him to trial, and on January 1649 he was executed as a traitor to the Commonwealth of England.

Charles II was recognized in Scotland. The army supporting him was defeated by Cromwell at the battle of Dunbar in 1650. Exactly a year later armies in favor of Charles II were routed by Cromwell at Worcester. That victory for Parliament ended the Civil War. Charles II escaped to France. Cromwell became the Lord Protector and ruled through Parliament. He was a firm believer in religious liberty and was in that respect ahead of his times.

On 12 June 1643, Parliament passed an ordinance calling for an assembly of learned and godly divines for the settling of the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England. On 1 July the Westminster Assembly convened, the first of 1,163 meetings until February 1649. There were 151 nominated members, 121 of whom were divines, and 30 laymen. The Assembly completed the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* and the *Directory of Public Worship*. The influence of these materials, particularly the Confession, on subsequent generations around the world has been immense. Congregationalists in 1658 and Baptists in 1677 embraced the same Confession making amendments which would constitute about ten percent of the whole.

The depth and quality of leadership among Puritan pastors in the mid-17th century is unique in the history of Christ's Church in England. Some of the better known Puritans of this time were Robert Bolton, Robert Harris, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Gouge. Among the more famous Puritans who lived through the period 1640-1660 and beyond, whose works have been republished in entirety or substantially in our generation, are Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Manton, Stephen Charnock, John Owen, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, John Flavel, William Bridge, David Clarkson, George Swinnock, Richard Sibbes, and John Howe. Of the leaders involved in the Westminster Assembly, William Gouge is one of the best known. He sustained the longest and most powerful ministry, possibly ever, in the history of London. Edmund Calamy whom some esteemed as the leader of the Presbyterian party stands out. He preached frequently to Parliament. Hanserd Knollys and Henry

Jessey were Baptists. Their biographies have inspired Baptists in recent years.³² In addition to the immortal works of John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress** and *The Holy War*, there are many famous books which continue to be republished. Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity* is one example and Baxter's *Reformed Pastor* is another.³³

The Restoration of the Monarchy and the Decline of Puritanism

In 1658 Cromwell died. It was soon evident that Richard Cromwell could not fill the leadership role of his father. To avoid further upheaval the option to restore the monarchy was pursued. At Breda in Holland Charles II promised to respect tender consciences. When he came to power that desire was soon over-ruled by fierce urges for revenge among the Anglicans who now had the upper hand. From 1643 to 1654 about 34 percent of the 8,600 parish clergy had suffered harassment of some kind as well as ejection for legitimate reasons of incompetency but also for giving support to the royalist cause or for popery.³⁴

In January 1661 Thomas Venner, a leader of the Fifth Monarchy movement, became prominent. He had on a previous occasion been arrested for planning an insurrection against Cromwell and been spared execution. Led by Venner, about fifty followers terrorized parts of London. Twenty-two people were killed. Wild elements and civil disorders by fanatics of this kind played into the hands of the ruling Anglicans. They did not discriminate. Anarchy provided an excuse for the authorities to clamp down on all Nonconformists. In vain the Baptists dissociated themselves from Venner. On January 10, 1661, a royal proclamation was passed forbidding all meetings of "Anabaptists, Quakers, and Fifth Monarchy men." Within a short time over 4,000 Quakers were imprisoned. Armed soldiers dragged Baptists out of their beds at night and thrust them in prison. This was the time when Bunyan spent twelve years in prison. He survived. Many did not.

There followed legislation against all Nonconformity known as the Clarendon Code, so named after the Earl of Clarendon.

In 1662 an act was passed which required strict conformity to the Church of England. If clergymen had not been episcopally ordained they were required to be re-ordained. Consent was required to every part of the Book of Common Prayer. Every minister was

* A 48 page condensation is available from Chapel Library.

required to take an oath of canonical obedience and to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant.

These demands had a devastating effect on the Puritans whose consciences could not submit to these conditions. Estimates vary but it is reckoned that about 2,000 were forced out of their livings.³⁵ Included were some in teaching posts. We can only guess how many Puritans chose to remain in the National Church in spite of the pressures to conform.³⁶ Included among those who remained was the famous William Gurnall, author of *The Christian in Complete Armour*.

1662 marks the beginning of decline for the English Puritans. The period which follows is known as the era of "dissent." The last well-known Puritans to pass from this world were John Howe who died in 1705 and Thomas Doolittle who died in 1707.³⁷

1662, then, is an important turning point in the story of the Puritans. The influence of their preaching waned then, but their writing ministry continued. Some of the most valuable Puritan treatises were penned in the post-1662 period. An example is that of John Owen. For instance, his monumental commentary on Hebrews, his book on indwelling sin, and his exposition of Psalm 130 were written after 1662. John Owen deserves the title "Prince of the Puritans." His entire works of 25 volumes probably constitute the best repository of reliable theology in the English language. He is viewed as *the* theologian of the Puritan movement.³⁸

Why did the Puritan movement decline sharply after 1662? Persecution of Dissenters was severe and relentless. Nonconformists were barred from the universities and this had an adverse effect on the standards of the ministry. The cogent spiritual unity which had been characterized and encouraged by the growing spiritual brotherhood of the Puritan pastors during the reign of Elizabeth and which had flowered in the ascendant Puritan movement which followed, declined after 1662. In 1672 the king issued a Declaration of Indulgence which for a short time eased the lot of Dissenters and Roman Catholics.

A principal reason for the decline of the Puritan Movement was their loss of unity. Dr. Lloyd-Jones placed the main blame with the Presbyterians. Instead of holding fast to the unity spelled out so clearly in passages like John 17, Presbyterian leaders resorted to political expediency. They lost sight of spiritual constraints.³⁹

A further reason contributing to the decline of Puritanism in the latter part of the 17th century is the fact that when the famous lead-

ers whose books we enjoy today passed on there were very few of similar caliber to take their place.

An Explanation of the Puritan Story

In an article published in the *Evangelical Quarterly* in 1980, J. I. Packer described Puritanism as a movement of revival.⁴⁰ He carefully defined what he meant as revival. I would argue that measured in terms of the 18th century awakening, the story of the Puritans as I have outlined it was not a revival in spectacular “Whitefieldian” fashion. There were some remarkable preachers like Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, and John Rogers and lesser known pastors like Samuel Fairclough of Kedington (not far from Cambridge) and his son Richard of Mells (a village in Somerset)—men with powerful awakening ministries who reaped rich harvests. But it would be difficult to show that this was typical of all the Puritans.

The explanation of the story of the Puritans is that here we have a race of preacher-pastors who believed in expounding and applying the whole counsel of God’s Word with all the hard work that requires. This was a labor in which they sought the closest conjunction of the Holy Spirit with the Word.⁴¹ Sometimes more, sometimes less, the Holy Spirit did breathe upon the Word and he breathed new life into dead souls. The Puritans did not seek a new age of wonders, signs, and miracles. Their view of a church is that a church rises or falls as the ministry of the Word rises or falls in that church.⁴² Essentially they believed in breaking up fallow ground. In this general character the Puritans are an example to every succeeding generation of pastors whether they be pastors laboring at home or in remote areas where the indigenous people are receiving the Word for the first time.

The Legacy of the Puritans

As we view the whole story of the Puritans in perspective, we can point to three Puritans who lived at the apex of the movement and offer a present-day definition. Puritanism is John Owen for *profundity and reliability* in theological formulation, Richard Baxter for *evangelistic and pastoral zeal*, and John Bunyan for *compelling, powerful preaching*. Note how different these three are. This is a reminder that for the most part the mainline Puritans were tolerant over differences (whereas fundamentalists today are not).

The Church of England has never recovered from the Ejection of 1662. From time to time there have been exceptional leaders like Bishop J. C. Ryle (1816-1900). Ryle followed the emphases of the Puritans and wrote in the style of the Puritans. His well-known book with the title *Holiness*^{*} is typical and expounds the Puritan doctrine of progressive sanctification. But enthusiasm for Puritanism is rarely found in the Church of England.

The legacy of Puritan theology and devotion has from time to time given birth to extraordinary preachers and leaders. Such was Charles Haddon Spurgeon correctly described as an heir of the Puritans. Another exemplar of Puritanism is Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who recommended Puritan books and followed them in his theology and style of expository preaching. In his leadership of pastors Dr. Lloyd-Jones was similar to the founders of Puritanism: William Greenham, John Dod, and Laurence Chaderton. As was the case with leading Puritans, Dr. Lloyd-Jones' pulpit ministry formed the basis of his writings which have been influential round the world.

The Puritan testimony of godliness and sound doctrine is more relevant than ever as we approach the end of the millennium. The English Puritans gave England the Christian family and the Lord's Day. They were balanced Calvinists and left us an example of a stable doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Preserved through their writings is the biblical doctrine of sin—which in this era of postmodernism we are in danger of losing entirely. Added to this was their view of the moral law as binding, not for salvation, but as a principle of conduct for the regenerated heart to glorify God in the obedience of faith. The Puritans call us to a robust prayer and devotional life. They remind us of the importance of keeping the heart with all diligence and of the reality of spiritual warfare and the need to be watchful.

The Puritan hope for the future growth of the Church was God-centered and founded on promises that cannot fail. The Puritan doctrine of the last things inspired prayer, motivated effort, inculcated endurance, and strengthened patience. One of the first to implement this outlook in practice was the Puritan John Eliot. In 1631 at the age of 27 he sailed for Massachusetts. He became pastor of a new church a mile from Boston. Burdened for the Indian tribes, he set himself to master Algonquin. He began at the age of 40 and eventually translated the entire Bible into Algonquin. Converts were made,

^{*} Available from Chapel Library, or also with a study guide from MZBI.

churches planted, and Indian pastors trained. By the time of his death, aged 84, there were many Indian churches.

Puritanism is eminently biblical and balanced in its proportion of doctrine, experience, and practical application. For that reason it is very attractive to the godly. Of its future place in the world who can tell? If the mainline Puritans were correct in their biblical optimism, we can be assured that the whole earth will be filled with a knowledge of Christ's glory as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14), and as the prophet declares...

*“My name will be great among the nations,
from the rising to the setting of the sun.
In every place incense and pure
offerings will be brought to My name,
because My name will be great among the nations,
says the LORD Almighty.” – Malachi 1:11*

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- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 224ff.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, p 30.
- ²⁰ I have drawn most of my material on the spiritual brotherhood from William Haller's, *The Rise of Puritanism*, Harper Torchbook, 1957, 464 pages, a most valuable resource which needs to be republished.

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